

Test on second Davids sample suspended

AFP, Turin

The analysis on the second urine sample of Juventus and Holland midfielder Edgar Davids, whose first sample showed a positive test for nandrolone, will not take place on Tuesday as planned, the Italian First Division club announced Monday evening.

The suspension of the test was decided by Rome's civil tribunal and revealed Monday evening by Juventus president Vittorio Chiusano.

"The competent authority has in a hearing this morning (Monday) listened to the appeal of the player, nominating an expert in pharmacology from Rome's La Sapienza University (to defend him), suspending (therefore) the execution of the operation of a revised analysis which had been planned for tomorrow morning at 08:30am," said the club in a statement.

Juventus added that they fully supported the player's denial of any wrongdoing.

Football tragedy Iranian police begin with arrests

AFP, Tehran

Iranian police have arrested a number of people following the collapse of a football stadium in the northern city of Sari which has left two people dead and close to 300 others injured, a press report said Tuesday.

Quoted by the pro-reform Norouz daily, Morteza Talaii, police chief in Mazandaran province, said officers began arresting a number of people Sunday, soon after a needle match between two top Iranian teams turned to tragedy.

Talaii, who did not specify how many people had been taken in since the accident, said the arrested people only appeared to be spectators, but gave no more details. He said further arrests are expected to be made soon.

Local hospital officials as well as state media confirmed that two people were dead after a stand at Mottaqi stadium in Sari, jam-packed with some 30,000 spectators but built to hold only half that many, fell apart during the match on Sunday.

State radio quoted officials as saying that another five people were in serious condition from the tragedy, which left 287 people injured according to officials.

Pirouzi, a perennial league leader with an enthusiastic nationwide following, were losing 2-0 at half-time to local First Division competitors Shamsushak in a do-or-die elimination cup match at the grounds.

President Mohammad Khatami has asked officials to launch an immediate investigation into the incident, state radio said.

Petit more relaxed now

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona's French World Cup and Euro 2000 winning midfielder Emmanuel Petit said Monday that he was happier with the Catalan side since the arrival of new coach Carlos Rexach.

"I like Rexach a lot," said Petit, who was relegated to the bench for most of the season under outgoing coach Lorenzo Serra Ferrer.

"We've had discussions twice in two days, which means that I've talked with him more in two days than Serra Ferrer in eight months," Petit said on his internet site.

The French player has been linked with a move to English Premiership under-achievers Chelsea this summer, after the former Arsenal player has failed to hold down a regular first team place at the Nou Camp.

Petit was brought on as a substitute in the 24th minute for injured Brazilian playmaker Rivaldo during last Saturday's 0-0 draw against Espanyol.

But with two draws in two weeks Rexach has failed to revive the fortunes of Barca, who are struggling in fifth position in the league.

Djoric sacked as Yugoslav coach

AFP, Belgrade

Yugoslav national football coach Milovan Djoric has been sacked by the Yugoslav Football Federation (FSF), the Tanjug news agency reported Monday.

Djoric paid the price for a series of poor results during qualifiers for the 2002 World Cup, notably their 1-0 home defeat at the end of last month to Russia.



Real Madrid superstar Luis Figo in a light mood during a news conference in Munich on May 8.

Real really keyed up

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Munich

Luis Figo said Monday he was confident Real Madrid can overcome their 1-0 first-leg deficit to defeat German giants Bayern Munich in Wednesday's Champions League semi-final return-leg match here.

The Spaniards are bidding to mete out the same treatment on the Germans as last season when Bayern were bounced out of the competition at the same stage by Real, who went on to win a record eighth European crown.

Last year however the situation was reversed with Bayern losing the first leg 2-0 in the Santiago Bernabeu stadium, but despite coming back to win 2-1 in Munich, it was not enough to get past the Spanish.

This time around Real are the underdogs after a series of poor results including a surprise 3-0 defeat at the weekend to league rivals Celta Vigo.

But Portuguese playmaker Figo remains confident of their ability to successfully defend their title.

"I've got a very strong feeling we're going to beat Bayern by a clear margin. I'm very, very optimistic," said Figo.

His feelings were echoed by star striker Raul, who should shake off a knock he picked up during the Celta Vigo bashing, to line out in Munich.

"We'll just have to do something really great, maybe all the goals we haven't scored will come on Wednesday," said the 23-year-old Raul.

"It's a great opportunity to prove the statistics wrong," added Raul, referring to Madrid's five failed outings at the Munich Olympic stadium.

And judging by last week's virtuoso defensive display by Bayern that caused their opponents to flee the pitch without shaking hands, it would seem that Real will need, as Raul says, to do something very special.

Bayern forward Alexander Zickler is hoping for a repeat of his performance last year when he scored their two second leg goals.

"No-one likes losing these big games. I just hope I can do what I did last year," added the 26-year-old Zickler.

The Real-Bayern pairing is becoming something of a classic

after Bayern fell 3-2 to Real last year having already beaten them twice, 4-2 and 4-1, in the second phase group matches.

But Bayern are hot favourites to gain revenge though after Giovanni Elber's snap-shot on 55 minutes in Madrid a week ago surprised Real's teenage goalkeeper

pions League goals for the Bavarians this year, is coach Ottmar Hitzfeld's main doubt.

"I'm very, very doubtful for the match, I'm worried sick," said the attacking midfielder who has a ligament and ankle problem.

Hitzfeld rested Jens Jeremies, Sammy Kuffour, Paulo Sergio and



Bayern Munich manager Ottmar Hitzfeld speaks at a press conference yesterday ahead of their Champions' League semifinal encounter against Real Madrid.

Iker Casillas. Competition statistics give Bayern a 90 percent chance of qualification just as they did in the quarter-final after their 1-0 victory at Manchester United.

Bayern haven't won the European Cup since 1976 and will have to hold firm against Real without inspirational captain Stefan Effenberg, suspended after picking up his fifth yellow of the campaign in Madrid.

Mehmet Scholl, who along with Elber has netted five Cham-

Michael Larnat in the 1-0 weekend Bundesliga win over Leverkusen which kept them level on points at the top with Schalke 04 with two games to go.

But although Vicente Del Bosque's side have looked out of sorts of late, with Claude Makelele, Fernando Hierro, Steve McManaman and Aitor Karanka rested this weekend to be in form for the tie, the Spaniards should be at full strength morally and physically and gunning for another European win.



Real Madrid star Roberto Carlos signing an autograph for an elderly fan at the Munich Airport on Monday.

Bowyer blow for Leeds

AFP, Paris

Leeds will miss Lee Bowyer for their Champions League semi-final second-leg clash with Valencia on Tuesday, after UEFA hit him with a three-match suspension Monday for a stamping incident during last Wednesday's goalless first leg at Elland Road.

A disciplinary commission of European soccer's governing body announced the decision Monday and although Leeds can appeal against the ban Bowyer will not be eligible to play in Tuesday's game. If Leeds do beat Valencia at the Mestalla stadium, Bowyer also looks set to miss the final unless an appeal against the ban is lodged by Thursday and proves successful.

The 24-year-old midfielder has six goals to his credit during this season's Champions League competition.

But he now looks unlikely to get the opportunity to add to that tally following his altercation with Valencia midfielder Juan Sanchez in Tuesday's first leg at Elland Road.

The two players tangled by the touchline and Bowyer was then seen to kick his opponent in the shoulder, before stamping on his chest.

Referee Pierluigi Collina took no action at the time, but Bowyer has now been punished for the incident following a review of video evidence.

A UEFA statement said that: "Based on the video footage of the match, the Control and Disciplinary Body decided to suspend Lee Bowyer for three UEFA club competition matches for his assault committed against Juan Sanchez."

"The evidence at hand clearly proved that the Leeds player deliberately stamped on his opponent."

Veron, Cragnotti committed for trial

AFP, Rome

Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti and the club's Argentinian international midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron were Monday sent for trial for alleged offences relating to the bogus passports affair, judicial sources revealed.

In all nine defendants were committed by magistrate Claudio Tortora for a hearing which is scheduled to start on October 11.

Veron was given an Italian passport by Rome authorities on September 9, 1999 enabling him to play as a European Union player but irregularities in documents submitted when applying for the passport have emerged, notably the claim that he had an ancestor from Calabria in southern Italy.

On May 2 both were interviewed by Tortora who on Monday acceded to investigators' claims that there was enough evidence to send the case for trial.

Monday's decision comes just three days after Italian football chiefs decided to scrap all limits on non-European players.

Internet keeps Bundesliga with tradition

AFP, Berlin

German football looks set to bow to Jan power after an internet campaign to return matches to their traditional Saturday afternoon, German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung reported on Monday.

The current format that includes one match on Friday night and one on Saturday night will be given the boot in favour of seven Saturday matches at 15:30 local time and two games at 17:30 on Sunday, the report claimed.

The "Pro 15:30" movement, that took its name in homage to the traditional Saturday afternoon kick off, launched the campaign in January.

and with the help of the internet, rallied thousands of demonstrators at matches during April.

Niether the German football federation nor audiovisual giant Kirch, who hold Bundesliga TV rights were forthcoming with details.

"There are contacts to optimise the actual ruling concerning football's timetable, that's all Kirch can say for now," company spokesman Hartmut Schulz told sports press agency SID.

"No comment," said German League president Werner Hackman.

Saturday afternoon sports events in Germany date back to the 1890's after Trade Unions won the five and a half day week and launched a string of workers sports associations.

Frank de Boer tests positive

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Frank de Boer, captain of the Dutch national team and his country's most capped international, tested positive for the banned substance nandrolone after a UEFA Cup quarter-final against Celta Vigo on March 15.

But the 30-year-old Barcelona defender, who has made 89 appearances for his country, protested his innocence on his official website icons.com.

"As you may have heard, I've recently tested positive after an initial test for nandrolone," said De Boer, in his third season with Barcelona after joining them from Ajax Amsterdam.

"I want to say this: I'm a professional athlete and I'd never knowingly use any illegal or banned drug under any circumstances. Let's be quite clear on that." The player, who won the European Cup with Ajax in 1995, said he had a "totally clear conscience".

"I would put my hand in the fire to swear my innocence because I have never taken that substance," De Boer told a news conference.

"I am very surprised by the result because I know I am completely innocent."

"I had a doping test after the Celta Vigo match in the return leg of the UEFA Cup on March 15," De Boer said. "And afterwards I was informed that I gave a positive result."

"I produced a result of 8.6 (milligrams per litre of blood) on the test when the limit is two. I am not worried, though, because I have a totally clear conscience and I am now waiting for the second

test." Barcelona said they would not make any official declaration on the case until the results of an obligatory second test were known.

But Boudewijn Zenden, one of De Boer's Dutch team mates at Barcelona, said he had "complete confidence" in the defender's innocence.

"I am extremely surprised because he is a person who has never taken anything strange. I would like to know what the real cause of



FRANK DE BOER

the problem is because no one seems to know where it comes from," the midfielder told reporters.

Fellow Dutch international Edgar Davids, who plays for Juventus in Italy, has also denied using an illegal substance after testing positive for nandrolone on March 4, just four days after his country's friendly against Turkey.

De Boer also played against the Turks in Amsterdam and he hinted that the fact that both players had given positive results in recent weeks may have something to do

with them coinciding in that game.

"I did have to eat something while I was playing for the Netherlands, but I am not saying that it was the fault of the national side. We are going to investigate all the possibilities both here at Barcelona and in the national side."

"I have spoken with Edgar (Davids) and we will look for a solution together, although we still haven't found an answer yet. "We are both players that have never taken anything strange in our lives. I've never even smoked a cigarette," said De Boer.

"I never use and will never use any type of drug or banned steroids but I can't check all my foods and drinks. Even though I'm always very conscientious about what I eat and drink, it's impossible to check everything."

"I know that one's own body can produce a certain amount of nandrolone but I don't know if that's what happened here. Basically, I don't know how it came into my bloodstream."

De Boer said he had been informed of the test result by club doctors after Barcelona's league game against Espanyol on Saturday.

"I was told after the Espanyol match and I thought it was a joke, but unfortunately it wasn't. Now I am going to look for a way of resolving the matter," He added, on his website, that he hoped the matter would be resolved quickly.

"There will be a second test very soon and I sincerely hope that will clear the whole matter up and prove my innocence. This has been very upsetting for me but I'm determined to show that I've done nothing wrong."

Premiership

City out of elite league

Football

AFP, London

Exactly one year after being promoted, Manchester City were relegated from the English Premiership after losing 2-1 to Ipswich at Portman Road on Monday despite taking the lead with 16 minutes remaining.

In a match that City had to win to stand any chance of staying in the top flight, Sean Goater bundled home the opener after 74 minutes to give the visitors hope.

However, four minutes later

Republic of Ireland international Matt Holland restored parity by drilling home the equaliser and Dutchman Martin Reuser sealed City's fate with a diving header five minutes from time.

Victory maintained the Tractor Boys' slim hopes of finishing third and claiming the last Champions League spot.

Despite going down City's famously strong support remains intact. The club has already sold over 16,000 season tickets for next season - more sales than when they won promotion last campaign.

City boss Joe Royle was under-

standably crestfallen.

"The most frustrating thing is having fought so hard for two years to do it (win promotion to the Premiership) and not being able to hang onto it."

Asked if he had thought of walking away from the job, Royle replied: "You don't make big decisions after a game like that. You go away and wallow for a while."

"Usually the new day brings a new attitude and new hope but tonight I'm going to go away and be miserable."

Ipswich, far from their fluent best, created a clutch of first-half chances but failed to deliver in the absence of 21-goal top scorer Marcus Stewart, who succumbed to a thigh strain.

Danny Fiaffo's industry set up the visitors' only bright moment in the opening 45 minutes by seizing on a loose Reuser pass and marauding into the Town half to find Paulo Wanchope.

But the Costa Rican's effort was easily gathered down to his left by Richard Wright.

Thereafter it was all Ipswich in a surprisingly low-key opening to a game both sides were desperate to win.

However, 16 minutes from time, Goater sent the travelling contingent in the 25,000-plus crowd wild with delight.

Wanchope stole a yard on John McGreal, found room for a shot on the edge of the area and when Wright spilled the ball, Goater reacted quickest, beating Titus Bramble to the rebound and poking into the corner of the net.

The Bermudian had only been on the field for a little over half-an-hour but was forced off after injuring himself in twisting for the shot.

Lifted by their goal, Jeff Whitley thudded a long-ranger into Wright's arms two minutes later.

But Holland reignited the hosts' hopes of the three points with a great 78th-minute finish.

Jamie Scovcroft headed down Jamie Clapham's free-kick. Richard Naylor touched on and the Republic of Ireland midfielder thrust out a leg to spear the ball wide of the despairing Carlo Nash.

City's fate was confirmed five minutes from the end as Alan Armstrong centred with the outside of his right boot and Reuser, planted his diving header out of Nash's reach.

Essandoh rewarded

AFP, London

English FA Cup semi-finalists Wycombe Wanderers repaid their quarter-final goalscoring hero Roy Essandoh on Tuesday by letting him go.

Essandoh, who looked to have completed a rags to riches story when he signed for Wycombe after he saw an advert on Teletext scored the winning goal in the quarter-final at Premiership outfit Leicester, was one of eight out-of-contract players the Second Division club released.



Steve Howey of Manchester City is beyond console after losing their Premiership match against Ipswich Town at Portman Road on May 7. The result means City will be relegated from the league.

Premiership table

After Monday's match between Ipswich and Manchester City (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Manchester United	36	24	8	4	77	26	80
Arsenal	36	20	9	7	61	35	69
Liverpool	36	19	8	9	65	37	65
Ipswich Town	37	20	5	12	56	41	65
Leeds United	36	18	8	10	55	41	62
Chelsea	36	16	9	11	64	42	57
Sunderland	37	15	11	11	44	39	56
Aston Villa	37	13	15	9	46	40	54
Charlton Athletic	37	14	10	13	50	53	52
Leicester	37	14	6	17	38	48	48
Newcastle	36	13	8	15	41	50	47
Tottenham	37	12	10	15	44	53	46
Southampton	36	12	10	14	35	45	46
West Ham	37	10	12	15	44	48	42
Everton	37	11	8	18	43	57	41
Derby County	37	10	11	16	36	58	41
Middlesbrough	37	8	15	14	42	43	39
Manchester City	37	8	10	19	40	63	34
Coventry City	37	8	9	20	36	63	33
Bradford	36	5	10	21	29	64	25

*Manchester United champions, Arsenal qualify for Champions League, Coventry, Bradford and Manchester City relegated